

Time Out



Photography: Steven Probert

Keith Haring's iconic 'FDR Drive Mural' will be on display for a limited time on Elizabeth Street

Almost half of the original panels will be seen again 40 years later, no car required.

Written by Mark Peikert

November 6 2025

One of Keith Haring's most significant public works is returning to view in New York this fall.

Martos Gallery on Elizabeth Street in downtown Manhattan has mounted a rare presentation of 14 of the original 30 panels from Haring's *FDR Drive mural*,

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originally created onsite in 1984 along a 300-foot stretch of the highway facing the East River. Long thought lost, fragmented or scattered, the panels now appear together again in a gallery setting—still hung roughly 4.5 feet from the ground, just as they were when drivers, cyclists and dog walkers first encountered them in real time 40 years ago.

Unlike many of Haring's more widely recognized subway chalk drawings or indoor-relegated works, the FDR mural, in private collections until now, was made for constant movement. It functioned as a kinetic frieze: a panoramic strip of dancing figures, radiating outlines, barking dogs, winged bodies and oversized lightbulbs, all outlined in Haring's unmistakable graphic script. The mural originally existed in conversation with the city's own rhythms: traffic flowing in two directions, headlights streaking by after dark, the river moving parallel to the highway.

Coming just months after Martos' Haring exhibit "Surface to Air," *FDR Drive Mural* is accompanied by an essay by critic and curator Bob Nickas, who writes about the mural as both social bulletin and private burst of expression, a work made during a moment of cultural tension in New York.

Haring created it in 1984, the year of Reagan's re-election and the acceleration of the AIDS crisis, years before Haring would be diagnosed himself and become one of the most visible artists of AIDS activism. Yet the mural is not mournful. Like all of Haring's work, it insists on movement and on life.

Part of what makes the return of these panels so striking is how un-museum-like they still are. After a year in New York City weather (and all that diesel exhaust), they are weathered and battered in a singularly New York City kind of way.

The mural will be available for viewing at Martos Gallery from November 13 through January 15, 2026.